1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

kingdom under Sobhuza I and Mswati and the various Ngoni States. Despite their common social and cultural origin these emergent polities had each its distinctive features. The special characteristics of Ngoni society are at least in part understandable as due to the differences in its social environment as compared with Zulu and Swazi. The Ngoni were migrants, whereas Zulu and Swazi were not. The Ngoni captured a large number of men and women of non-Nguni origin who were assimilated into the Ngoni State as individuals, whereas for the most part the Zulu and Swazi States expanded by the incorporation of existing social groups as groups, not as individuals, and these groups, if not all Nguni in origin, at least belonged to closely allied peoples.

Thus to set the Ngoni in proper perspective we must begin with a brief description of their Nguni forebears. In the eighteenth century the Nguni were grouped into a large number of small chiefdoms each containing a dominant agnatic lineage segment to which the chief belonged. Each chiefdom contained segments of other lineages, and most lineages had segments in a number of chiefdoms, one segment being dominant in its chiefdom. Lineages were exogamous, their members were graded in terms of primogeniture and the ranking of wives, and as a result of quarrels segments transferred their allegiance from one chief to another or even founded new chiefdoms. Most residential settlements were small, containing only the agnatic descendants of a living man, with their wives and children, and were divided into three sections or 'houses', led by the great, right- and left-hand wives of the polygynous head of the settlement. There were also larger homesteads containing the dwellings of chiefs and other members of the dominant lineage as well as those of many genealogically unrelated dependants. The chief was assisted by his agnatic kinsmen and by the heads of non-chiefly lineage segments and by other unrelated men whom he placed as lieutenants, or indunas, in charge of districts or responsible for specific administrative, judicial or military tasks. For fighting and hunting the men of the chiefdom were organized in divisions, each attached to a royal homestead. There was also an organization of youths into small age-sets, groupings of coevals who had been circumcised together.

At the turn of the century, with the emergence of large kingdoms, each containing many chiefdoms under the leadership of a king, the age-set system changed its form and the royal homesteads acquired greater significance. Circumcision was discontinued and the age-sets began to be organized on a national basis. Each age-set constituted a regiment in the national army, had it barracks

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thorn stuck at the top of the *isikhutu*, and round it they put narrow bands of beads (*intuyeya* and *isincwaye*) arranged in layers. Royal women wore leopard and lion claws among the beads. Round the neck and on the arms they wore coils of brass wire (*amasongo*) which they got from the Arabs, or *izipote*, strings of beads wound round a piece of cloth. The kilt of soft dressed leather (*isidwaba*) reached from the waist to the knee, and wrapped well over. A long piece of soft leather (*ingcayi*) was fastened on the left shoulder and reached a little below the knees. On the edges of the *ingcayi* were fastened small bells made of brass (*ngomani*). Ngoni women did not like to cut their bodies with tattoo marks. They said it was ugly. The *inkosikazi* might decorate other wives at the *ngoma* dance because she had a large store of beads and wire and leather cloths.

The common features of the life of leading women as illustrated in these texts were: the number of attendants and servants in their households and their consequent freedom from manual work; the etiquette surrounding life in the *indlunkulu* and the big house, and the formality of hospitality, beer-drinks and dances; relationships with their *induna*, and with their husbands, and, as illustrated by Margaret Jere, with the paternal grandmother who supervised their upbringing when they were young.

In addition to the *induna* in charge of the big house, the royal women and leading women in the villages of chiefs and *alumuzana* were surrounded by a number of young girls and serving women. These were known in pre-European days as domestic slaves or servants (*micetho*), girl companions (*izidandani*), nurse girls (*alezi*) and older women attendants (*agogo*). Informants said that in pre-European days there were fifteen or twenty girls in each royal household and the number was constantly being added to when female slaves were captured in war and allocated as servants to the Paramount's wives. All the texts in this chapter refer to the fact that the royal women and the leading women did no work, and there was always a nostalgic refrain from senior women informants about the time devoted to hair-dressing and beauty treatments, to 'just sitting', and to dancing and drinking beer, while all the household tasks and the care of the children fell to the servants. The Ngoni royal women, even in the 1930's, commanded the labour of six to ten women and girls in each household. The hard physical work of fetching firewood and water, pounding grain, preparing vegetables and often cooking too, was done largely by servants in the Paramount's and chief's villages where I stayed. There were young nurse girls and older women to help with the children and with the adolescent girls. There were no longer any domestic slaves, and the domestic helpers, who were often distant relatives of the wives, appeared to enjoy the prestige of being attached to an important house.

The royal women in pre-European days were distinguished by the clothes and ornaments they wore which were reserved for the royal

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

emphasized this, and was a reminder of their careful bringing up in their father's village surrounded by their attendant girls and older women.

Many of the *umsindo* songs referred to well-known events in Ngoni history. Others were warnings against jealousy when living in a polygynous household. One of these, said to be a lament of the women about the difficulties of polygynous households, was very popular in the northern kingdom and was used by Ngoni ministers in the churches when speaking against polygamy, even though the actual words of the song seemed to be referring to a historical event.

The boys and girls went through one common ceremony about the age of seven, when their second teeth were coming. The local tribes practised various forms of scarification, including facial tribal markings. The Ngoni never did this in the past and said that they despised it. Their distinctive marking was the piercing of the ear lobes in order to insert a small piece of reed, or a stud, or some beads. Formerly, when captives were taken in war, or when a village was conquered and annexed, the local people, especially the younger men, were forced to have their ears pierced as a condition of service in the regiments. After the Europeans came, the forcible ear-piercing was resisted by the local tribes, but among the Ngoni, especially those of trans-Zambesi clans, it continued to be practised, and I saw it being carried out in several villages. It was done in the dry cold-weather months, usually by one of the senior women of the children's family or house, and included all the children of about the same age who wanted to have their ears pierced. The woman pierced the lobe with a thorn, or a needle if she had one, and threaded some cotton through the hole. A day or so later they put in tiny bits of grass and replaced these with larger and larger bits until the hole was considered the right size.

After this ear-piercing ceremony, the boys' and girls' groups developed on their separate lines until their members became interested in each other as members of the opposite sex. Then, as I said at the beginning of the chapter, the groups of youths and girls were the two most prominent age groups in a village. They paid great attention to their clothes, washed with sweet-smelling leaves, used fats to anoint their hair, and the girls wore bead ornaments in their hair and on neck and wrists. Thus adorned, they spent their leisure time, especially in the cold weather after harvest, visiting other villages, usually in separate groups of youths and girls, except when they went as a team to dance *ngoma* in a neighbouring village.

In the social life of young people in Ngoni villages, the *ngoma* dance played an important part, especially in the northern kingdom. It took place after the harvest and was organized on a 'village team' basis. The boys practised their dance outside the cattle kraal in the evenings, and the girls did their dancing by themselves as a rule. But on the occasion

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

then meant running out of the compound to the freedom of the village. At that time young children might behave outrageously and be punished for it, but they were not held accountable. The nurse girls and the mother, or some other adult, was blamed for letting the child grow up with such an uncontrolled temper or appetite or tongue. Once children were recognized as having passed the young child stage, that is when they had their second teeth, they themselves were held accountable for their behaviour and punished more severely, even though parents were also blamed for careless upbringing. The social sanctions of rebuke and ridicule, which began to operate in the later years of young childhood to only a limited extent, were now seen in their full force, made use of by adults, and still more effectively by the children's own age-mates. The fear of estrangement, of social ostracism as the penalty for failing to conform to the required manners and ways of living, had increasing force as the children grew older. As little children they were buttressed and protected by adults in their childish quarrels with, and moods and attitudes towards, other children. As boys in the dormitory and as girls in the girls' circle they had no longer such protection, and the result was that they became increasingly sensitive to the opinion of their peers. Professor Wilson in her study of Nyakusa age-villages, has called this social awareness the quality known as 'being good company'—getting on well with their contemporaries.

It was at this stage, at the beginning of the children's newly-found independence, that the ear-piercing ceremony took place. In contrast with the neighbouring peoples, the Ngoni had no facial or body markings, and it was the pierced ears which showed they were true Ngoni. In the days of warfare, captives, especially boys and men, were forcibly made to have their ears pierced, and hence a number of men in the Ngoni kingdoms who were not of Ngoni clans were found with pierced ears. Sometimes their children went to their parents and said, 'We want to be made Ngoni now.'

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

852 Children of Ngoni families, as also these others, chose their
304 own time to have their ears pierced, though sometimes their father or father's sister or father's mother reminded them that it was about time. It was nearly always soon after the second teeth had come, and children who delayed having it done were taunted by their fellows: 'You, are you afraid, my age-mate? See my ears already have bone in them.' This
[237] was a reference to the round plugs of bone inserted when the hole was large enough. A bit of thread was put in at first, then a small bit of grass, then a fine reed, and finally a bone plug. Ear piercing was always done in the cold weather so that the lobe of the ear would heal quickly. It was carried out by a leading woman of one of the Ngoni families, who watched the children to see how they took it. They knew it was a test
[152] of courage, and however much they were afraid it would hurt, they stood like little statues during the operation, with a face as set and expressionless as when they were being beaten.

Accountability for individual behaviour was one aspect of
866 the responsibility which Ngoni adults now began to demand
868 from children. Another aspect was the performance of their allotted tasks. The responsibility for cattle herding was in a sense a corporate responsibility of all the boys whose fathers owned cattle. The older herd-boys had in fact to answer for
[233] the condition of the cattle they brought back every evening to their owners. They passed on, however, a number of small duties, such as care of the calves, sheep and goats, to the younger boys, who in turn were held responsible by the older boys for performing these duties. The boys' world, centred in the dormitory, recognized grades of responsibility from which no one escaped.

Another facet of responsibility which was at a later stage
868 remarked on often by Ngoni adults, was seen in children's
[517] choice of leisure-time occupations, according to their individual manual and intellectual and artistic capacities. They stopped playing childish games and began instead to develope their skills in making things from local materials.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

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26. Making clay figures

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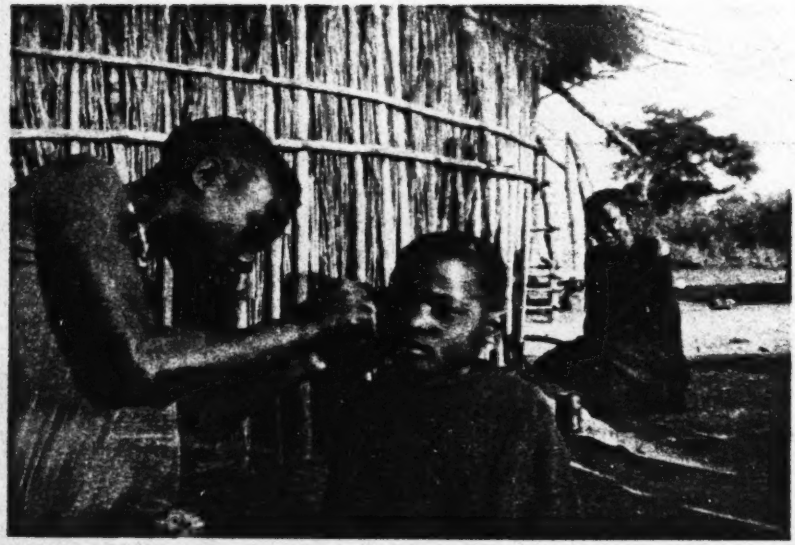

[facing page 144]

27. Ear piercing

7: Hodgson G-5 (1926) 1933 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

Finally, on the *tsiku la kumwa*, after they have taken away *njobvu's* five mats, they bring back the boy *anamuali* from the *liunde* to the *mzinda*, each boy carrying a mat. They dance to the drums without *vingwe*, and the women make them small presents (*masupo*). Then they put the *masecke* rattles on the boy *anamuali* and their *aphungu*, who dance till their friends and relations have twice given them *masupo*. Then the youths who were initiated during the preceding year put on the *masecke* and dance till they also have earned *masupo* from their friends and relations.

Then the older ones come and dance again, and receive *masupo* from the women. Finally, all the men and boys join in dancing the *chisamba*, after which they proceed to the *liunde*, where they form a chain, each one grasping the waist of the one in front, the *anamuali* in the middle. Thus they return to the *mzinda*, singing, "*Ndawala mkhoma kuliyede*" (It is good to run about early in the morning), and dance till the women *supa* them. After another retreat to the *liunde*, they return carrying sticks. Armed with these, they go round to every house for presents of beer, beads, etc., picking up en route anything they see lying about, and demanding ransom from the owners. On the morning following the *tsiku la kumwa*, the boys precede the girls to the house of the headman, and each boy receives from his *phungu* the new name which he will henceforth carry through life. During the next two nights, the boys sleep again in the *bwalo* hut with their *aphungu*; and for three days they may not see their mothers, nor talk to anyone except their *aphungu* and each other, unless a man or woman first gives them a small present. The *aphungu* similarly may not address men older than themselves. On the third evening, the *aphungu* take each boy to his mother, and tell her, "This is your son; his name is now so-and-so." The boy is told that this is his mother's house, and that he must not go to his father's bed, nor take anything in the absence of his parents, nor ask for anything that he is not given. This exhortation concluded, the mother presents the *aphungu* with a fowl apiece, and they and the boy are free to do as they will.

No form of circumcision is practised either by the Achewa or the Angoni.

4. *Forbidden and enjoined unions* (*Chewa*).

The Achewa are matrilineal and matrilocal. Grandfather and cousin marriage were formerly in vogue; and every eldest son was obliged first to marry a daughter of his mother's eldest brother, if there was one. After having done this he could choose his other wives himself. Even now this cousin marriage is the common practice, though its non-observance results no longer in a case stated before the chief. A man might marry his father's father's wives, his son's son's wives or his son's daughter, but not his daughter's daughter; nowadays, such cases are rare.

It was formerly deemed incestuous to marry anyone of the same clan, even though of a different tribe, but not to marry anyone of a different clan with the same tabu. This custom, though still favoured by the older men, is now falling into disuse. Incest was sometimes practised to increase the effect of unlawful medicine; but the perpetrator was suspected of witchcraft and, when detected, was always punished by death. It is still considered a serious

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5

We have also to recognize that the wider connotation of the word is in constant use to-day, and it will be apparent in the course of this article that those who like to be thought Ngoni but have no real claim to the name, find ways in which to identify themselves with the real Ngoni, and to impress upon outsiders that they share the distinction of that name.

III. NGONI SOCIETY AS A CULTURAL UNIT. It is evident that the field worker who tries to describe and analyse the society which is found in the Ngoni areas to-day has some difficulty in establishing appropriate and correct terms. Here is a society which is a compound of ethnic units, subdivided into clans according to kinship, stratified into ranks, held together by a ruling aristocracy and a strong centralized political organization. This society differs radically from that of a homogeneous community where the sociological structure has gone through a long process of integration or disintegration, or has remained static over a period of time. The Ngoni created their 'state', that is, their present political and social units, within a relatively short period by a series of deliberate acts. They brought with them a pattern of society from the south; they modified[1] it during their forty odd years of wandering and warfare; and they moulded it finally when they settled in their present areas. Within this deliberately created social structure the principles of centralization and rank were dominant. Based on these two principles the Ngoni set up, in an alien milieu, the institutions of chieftainship,[2] of military training, of systematized law courts, of recognized ranks in society, of patrilineal succession and inheritance, speaking among themselves a language foreign to the country. The resultant society, a compound of the Ngoni ruling aristocracy and the conquered indigenous people, formed the Ngoni state. So conscious was all this social engineering that old men to-day can give detailed accounts of the various processes, political, legal, military, by which the conquerors and conquered were brought under one rule.[3] Borrowing a term from European history,

[1] One striking modification was the replacing of the village as a small kinship group by villages of hundreds of huts, with an elaborate organization into hamlets.

[2] Using chieftainship in the sense of the Ngoni *inkosi* whose office and powers were very different from those of the surrounding petty chiefs.

[3] As one of these processes, the piercing of the ear-lobes became the 'tribal

it might almost be called nation-building. And when you have heard the Ngoni Paramount discuss the position of minorities in his country, and his claim to territories no longer under his rule, you could almost imagine you were in the corridors of the League Secretariat at Geneva.

The Ngoni state, however, to-day is not only a political structure, a framework for political and social life. Within that structure, forming parts of it, are institutions embodying those social, political, economic, and ethical values which are peculiarly Ngoni. The Ngoni, that is to say, when they absorbed other peoples into their state, imposed upon them a new social order together with the values inherent in that order. Patrilineal succession and inheritance, for example, introduced by the Ngoni, was bound up with the relations of father to son, the acquiring and distribution of cattle, the worship of clan and family ancestors. Each institution had its clearly related rules and values, and these are made explicit by the Ngoni when they describe them. The casual European observer in the country sees only the Paramount Chief and his subordinate chiefs ruling over a welter of tribes with a confusing mixture of social behaviour. To the Ngoni, however, and to the anthropologist who follows their lead, the pattern of society which they set up is clear and definite; it has a cultural reality of its own. The seeming welter of tribes is in reality an ordered relationship. Each group, tribe, or clan, has its recognized place *vis-à-vis* other groups. Within that ordered relationship the different groups have pursued a process of preserving some customs and adopting others, and they can give a coherent account of what they have retained and what they have borrowed. The real Ngoni do not admit to borrowing much. They like to think of their society as very distinctive as well as being well integrated. Yet the degree of modification in Ngoni society needs very close investigation because it shows much variety in different localities.

When they entered their present areas the Ngoni were very inferior in numbers to the indigenous people. How was it then that they were able to subdue them? And having subdued them, how did they pre-

mark' of the Ngoni as various forms of tattooing were of other tribes. Ear-piercing was sometimes forced (i.e. upon captives taken in war), sometimes voluntary. To-day children of local clans are teased by children of Ngoni clans and called 'Chewa' if they have not had their ears pierced, and they beg their mothers to take them to the 'doctor' to be 'made Ngoni'.

11:Lancaster G-5 (ca. 1935) 1937 FR5 Ngoni FR5

(8) Mguzhulu Mphanza ; one of the indunas of the Ziolomba Regiment. Crossed over the Zambesi in 1835. No further particulars known. 159 173

(9) Ntabeni Kumalo ; half brother of Zongendaba. Father, Hlatshwayo ; mother, unknown ; wife, Uthuvi. Regiment, Ziolomba. Died and was buried in Ufipa Country in 1846. [701]

(10) Mafu Kumalo ; elder brother of Hlatshwayo. Father, Mangangati. Killed in action prior to arrival at the Zambesi.

(11) Hlatshwayo Kumalo, the son of Mangangati of the Kumalo clan ; married Mquamache Nzima. He had three brothers, Mafu, Gumete and Mphange. He was the father of Zongendaba, Ntabeni, Somfula, Mgai and Lomapele. [614]

I have been unable to ascertain if he took part in the Great Migration. My information leads me to the conclusion that he was dead before Tshaka vanquished the Ama-Ndwandwe.

(12) Mtwalu Jere ; born before the Crossing of the Zambesi, about 1833 ? Father, Zongendaba ; mother, Nqutu Nzima ; wife, Magodise ; sons, Amon Jere, and Yohane Jere. Regiment, Manyoka Masoko. Refused the chieftainship because he stated that his father's, Chief Zongendaba's, last wishes had not been carried out. There is no truth in the statement that he was unfitted to hold the chieftainship through physical defects. Died in Nyasaland (Angoni Land), 1890. [643]

(13) Mombera Jere (Mbelwa) ; born at Chulu on the way to Fipa, 1840. Mother, Umnene Nzima, a Swazi ; father, Zongendaba ; half-sister, Mphangela ; blood sister, Lomagazi, who it is stated by some was born before the Zambesi was crossed ; son, Chimtunga, whose mother was cast off because of adultery. Chimtunga's appointment was not recognised by his grandfather's indunas. Died in 1891, Angoni Land, Nyasaland. [684] [643]

(14) Mperembe Jere. Not born north side of the Zambesi River ; it is stated his mother did not cross the Zambesi in 1835. 159 173

Mperembe went into the Awemba Country after the break up of the tribe, but appears to have crossed back eastwards over the Loangwa River and joined Mombera and Mtwalu about 1868/9, after being badly beaten by the Chitimukulu. 643

It is known in the Mpezeni country that he captured Chanda mukulu, sister of Chitimukulu, whom he brought back with him and married at Mtelela village near the Mulowi River, that he had one son by her named Chinombo, and that after the Ngoni rebellion Chanda mukulu was returned to her own country ; she resided on the Mackera River for some years. She had slits in her ears so large that one could put one's hand through them. [583] [304]

My informant, Sayeye Phiri, who was born at Kasitu, was caught by Mombera's people at Kanyenda, Kotakota, and made a slave ; she knew Mombera and Chanda mukulu well. She is well over seventy and resides in the Fort Jameson Location. Mperembe Jere appears to have been a disgruntled and bloodthirsty despot and to have had no interests other than bloodthirsty raids and the joys of his harem. He [115] [567] [152]

/9 cont'd/

234 the hunt walks in the middle of the line, with a responsible person posted on each flank. A started animal, if not shot by the guns, usually turns to run parallel to the line of hunters, who hurl spears and knobkerries at it, and send their dogs after it. The chances of escape for a hunted animal are fairly high. Animals are also trapped, usually with a piece of meat tied to the muzzle of a gun. Hunting with nets is sometimes undertaken in the wet season. Rats are caught in small conical traps baited with beans. The rat chews through a piece of string and releases a green stick, thereby strangling itself.

[714] Shields, once the pride of the Ngoni armies, are not carried on hunts and are infrequently seen.

VI

291 [771] It is only the old men who still wear skin garments, and then only as additions to European style clothing. Men are dressed in khaki shorts and shirts, long trousers, cast-off European clothing, or clothes brought back from the army. Often two shirts are worn on top of one another. Women wear a blouse, a skirt tied on a tape, a cloth wrapped round on top of the skirt, and a small cloth tied [854] round their waist. If carrying a baby, the cloth supporting the child is slung over the left and under the right shoulder, and another cloth may be wrapped round the woman and child under her armpits. Dresses are also worn, and sometimes a singlet under the blouse. Shoes are less common for women than for men. Men /10/ wear a [1111] variety of European style hats, but women wear only embroidered cloths or berets, or in the case of poorer women, plain bands of cloth.

Children go naked, or may be draped in whatever garment, of whatever size, happens to be available. If the money is there to pay for them, boys are dressed in shorts and shirts, and girls in little dresses.

304 [778] In the old days, every adult had slit ears, but this custom has died out. Women nowadays pierce their ears if they wish, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a small slit made as a

/10 cont'd/

304 tribal mark and a hole made for individual ornamentation. Earrings, 301 beads, and other ear ornaments are worn, including safety pins. 824 Young girls from time to time make black rectangular marks on their 302 cheeks by pressing on to them strips of nkholosa grass. These marks are quite black at first, and gradually lose their colour over a period of a year. Scarification of the face and body is carried out on both men and women for ornament as well as for medication, but there 531 is very little regularity of pattern, save for the inverted crescent 619 mark made between the eyebrows of women. This is the Nsenga tribal mark.

For dancing, most people wear their best clothes, and girls 535 and young women carry whistles on lanyards round their necks. When dancing ngoma, the most important tribal dance, miniature shields are carried, and a special type of knobbed stick that is held aloft. Less frequently seen are the wrist and ankle trappings, and skin garments that used to be associated with this and other regimental dances. Nowadays, women's skirts and frocks are sometimes seen worn by men on such occasions.

Single-ended and double-ended drums are used as accompani- 534 ments to dancing, while boys play hand pianos. Girls play on a single string fiddle made from a reed. Whistles are bought from the stores. Old fashioned fiddles with gourd resonators are rare.

Boys spend much of their time making and playing with toys 534 of various kinds. Animals, men, and motor cars are fashioned out of mud, while more elaborate motor cars are made from mealie stalks. A favourite toy consists of two wheels, up to six inches in diameter, on an axle with a handle some four or five feet long, terminated in another wheel of the same size. This construction, made of straw, representing the elements of a motor car, is pushed along by boys of ages four to ten.

The well-known game, involving four rows of twelve holes, with three stones in each hole, is played by men, usually in holes scooped out in the ground. A favourite game of girls and boys consists of throwing up beans with one hand and catching them again